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Etolia

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This article is an expansion based on a canon element. For canon information on this topic, follow the link to The Witcher Wiki: **Empire_(Oko_Yrrhedesa)**.

Etolia

Etolian Coat of Arms during Nilfgaardian rule

General information

Status

Empire (formerly)
Kingdom (formerly)
Nilfgaardian Province

Ruler

Imperial Governor
Etolian Crown (formerly)
Emperor (formerly)

Etolia, formally known as the **Kingdom of Etolia** and in ancient times as **Imperium Etolium**, or just simply the **Imperium**, is a seaside province of the Nilfgaardian Empire and one of its most fertile regions. It is widely regarded as "*Nilfgaard's granary*."

Etymology

The name Etolia derives from the main river that flows through the country—the Etol River. Thus, in Common, it means *“land of the Etol River.”*

History

Ancient Times

In pre-human eras—long before the arrival of the vrans or elves—the landscapes of Etolia were home to beings such as nymphs and their kindred, who roamed its forests, rivers, mountains, and meadows. The caves of Etolia, meanwhile, were inhabited by creatures that would later come to be known as kobolds. These beings, like the nymphs, persisted into the human age, though seemingly in ever-diminishing numbers.

Among the early humans of the Imperium—and those who would later become the Etolians, that is, the descendants of Imperium citizens who survived its fall and intermingled with the Nordlings—these creatures were known as *kobalos*. It is believed that the modern Northern Common term kobold may in fact derive from the pre-Common tongue spoken by the ancestors of the Etolians—what is now somewhat misleadingly referred to as the “Scholar’s Tongue.”

These creatures were often found near cobalt-rich areas, particularly in the caves of the Red Horn Massif, and it is likely that their name arose from this association.

The Vran Presence in Etolia (1440s B.R. – 4 A.R.)

Around the 1440s Before the Resurrection, the vrans settled in Etolia, drawn by its high exposure to sunlight and warm climate, both vital to their cold-blooded physiology.

Due to their known presence in the Northern Kingdoms as well, scholars remain divided on the origin of the Etolian vrans. Some argue they were part of the same northern population displaced south by unknown forces, while others suggest they were a separate offshoot sent deliberately to colonize the southern regions.

What is certain, however, is that their presence left a deep imprint. Most pre-human ruins discovered in Etolia are attributed not to elves or other elder races, but to the vrans.

During their tenure, they established a patchwork of decentralized, quasi-minarchist, quasi-feudal states that lasted for centuries.

By the 4th century After the Resurrection, however, these vran polities had all but collapsed. Their decline was driven by a combination of factors: the relentless spread of early human settlers—who would go on to form the Imperium by the 130s B.R.—and internal rivalries between vran rulers competing for control over Etolia’s most fertile lands.

By the time of the Etolian Kingdom—and later, under Nilfgaardian dominion—only scattered remnants of the vran population remained, often confined to urban ghettos. Still, they persisted in greater numbers in Etolia than in the Northern Kingdoms, where pogroms and forced relocations had nearly erased them from the social landscape, relegating the survivors to isolated reservations in the Blue Mountains.

130s B.R. – 790s A.R.: The Founding, Rise, and Fall of the Imperium

Following the arrival of humans into the world around the 230s B.R., various groups began to organize across the regions surrounding what would later become Etolia. Over the course of roughly a century, these scattered tribes gradually coalesced into what would eventually be known as the Imperium, the first empire in human history—not to be confused with its later namesake, the Nilfgaardian Empire, though the latter would indeed draw partial inspiration from this ancient civilization.

This early political entity is believed to have originated near the border between modern-day Gemmeria and Etolia, with its first capital being located in Magne, expanding steadily southward. From its initial settlements in southern Gemmeria, the Imperium reached its zenith in the region that would eventually become Vicovaro, gradually absorbing numerous local tribes and subjugating various non-human groups through the strategic use of mages—a class whose presence marked a turning point in the militarization of magic. It was during this time that the first recorded "spellswords" emerged in human history.

However, mages were far more than mere soldiers. The mage class occupied a central and semi-autonomous role in the structure of the Imperium. Rather than serving solely as advisors or tools of the throne, mages held significant independent power. Even the Emperor could not issue them direct orders; their cooperation had to be *requested*, not commanded—an arrangement that underscored their influence within the empire's sociopolitical framework.

Perhaps the most enduring legacy of the Imperium was its language, later referred to by both Nilfgaardians and Nordlings as the Scholar's Tongue (*Schola Linguarum*). Following the collapse of the Imperium, this language endured for centuries as a lingua franca among human populations along the western coast of the Old Continent—both due to its relative ease of learning, and because many of the southern communities the Nordlings encountered still retained echoes of the Imperium's cultural imprint.

It significantly shaped the development of the later Nordling culture as well of Northern Common—the creolized future tongue of the Nordlings—and left a subtler but lasting mark on the evolving Nilfgaardian language. As such, the continued use of the Scholar's Tongue in diplomatic, academic, and magical circles across both the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard can be directly traced to this shared linguistic heritage rooted in the old Imperium.

At its height, the Imperium stood as one of the earliest organized human civilizations in the post–First Conjunction world, marking a formative era in the history of humanity on the Old Continent. Yet its power gradually waned over the centuries, culminating in its collapse during the 790s A.R., roughly three decades after the arrival of the Nordlings through the Landing of the Exiles into the Old Continent.

By the 760s A.R., these newcomers had already established their own proto-kingdoms in the North, which rapidly evolved into powerful nation-states by the 790s A.R. From there, successive waves of Nordling settlers pushed ever southward, founding new realms such as Metinna, Maecht, and Ebbing, and extending the Nordling sphere deeper into southern lands.

By its final century, the once-mighty Imperium had been reduced to a fragment of its former self, confined to what is now roughly modern-day Etolia. Even this last remnant did not endure for long: Nordling colonists continued their advance, intermingling with the surviving human populations of the Imperium and ultimately giving rise to a new cultural and political identity—the Kingdom of Etolia.

The Failed Southern Expeditions and the Myth of the Lost Colonies (10 A.R. – 300s A.R.)

At some point between the 1st and 4th centuries After the Resurrection, the Imperium launched a series of exploratory missions aimed at venturing southward—hoping to chart unknown territories and, ideally, expand its influence through the discovery of new lands.

To its misfortune, none of these expeditions ever returned. Despite repeated attempts by various emperors—each convinced they would succeed where their predecessors had failed—all ventures ended in silence. Eventually, the Imperial court abandoned such endeavors altogether, concluding (with a degree of resigned certainty) that the southern horizon held nothing but an endless sea.

However, some scholars and folklorists contest this assumption. They argue that these expeditions may have indeed reached distant lands, but that their members, for reasons lost to time, were unable or unwilling to return. One of the more provocative theories links these “lost colonists” to a specific ethnic group later found in Ofir: the Fanila.

The Fanila are often noted for their distinctive features—olive to pale skin tones, lighter hair and eye colors uncommon in other ethnic groups of the region—and some believe these traits may be remnants of Imperium ancestry. According to this theory, long before Ofir’s unification, these hypothetical descendants of the Imperium reached Ofieri lands and established independent city-states, kingdoms and other types of nations in the area, which were later absorbed into the greater Ofieri realm by the time of the Unification Wars took place.

The Non-Human Migrations (770s A.R.)

Following the fall of the elven rival to the Imperium—the Golden Empire of the Aen Nílfe—numerous non-human populations (primarily goblinoids, who had once formed part of the vast slave caste of the Golden Empire, along with their former slave keepers-turned-liberators, the then-nearly-extinct orcs) began migrating into Imperium territory in search for a better life.

This mass influx placed a heavy strain on the already weakened Imperium, accelerating its collapse. By that time, the Imperium was no longer capable of assimilating large populations due to its declining stability and waning administrative capacity.

It was during this chaotic period that the earliest stereotypes of orcs began to spread among humans and the other Elder Races. These depictions—often negative and dehumanizing—would endure for centuries. As a result, orcs and their descendants, the half-orcs, came to live at the fringes of the Nordling societies that rose after the fall of the Imperium—confined to ghettos like other non-humans, relocated to remote reservations, or eking out precarious lives as free trappers, mercenaries, warbanders, or criminals.

The Kingdom of Etolia (790s – 1216 A.R.)

Unlike many other regions, the collapse of the Imperium had a comparatively limited impact on Etolia. This was largely due to Etolia's direct inheritance of the Imperium's core territories and, more importantly, its institutional legacy. As such, the newly formed kingdom was able to adopt and implement the former imperial structures with minimal disruption, allowing it to recover swiftly from the post-Imperium period.

Within only a few generations, Etolia had emerged as the second great power of the pre-Nilfgaardian era. It became the undisputed economic, social, and cultural hub of both the southern and northern reaches of the western coast of the Old Continent. Etolian fashion set the trends of the time, Etolian cuisine spread across neighboring realms, and artists from distant lands looked to Etolian schools and movements for inspiration.

Such was the kingdom's prestige and influence that even the young Nilfgaard—then progressing through its monarchical and republican phases—would come under the sway of Etolian ideas. This cultural influence reached its peak in the 12th century A.R., when Etolia had achieved what some consider to be the highest standard of living of its time.

However, prosperity bred complacency. Lost in its golden age, Etolia failed to notice the transformation of one of its closest neighbors: Nilfgaard. From a senatorial republic, Nilfgaard evolved into a centralized and absolutist empire. In 1216 A.R., Emperor Fergus var Emreis chose Etolia as the first example of what awaited all who would oppose the expanding Empire.

The Imperial Army launched a devastating campaign, swiftly overwhelming Etolia. Its administrative systems were dismantled, its cultural identity shattered, and its societal values systematically eradicated in an effort to break the spirit of the population. A new

provincial regime was imposed by Nilfgaard—known among the locals as "the government of an overlord." The trauma of the conquest ran deep, and in the four decades that followed, no significant uprising was ever attempted.

The Northern Wars (1239–1272)

During the Second Northern War in 1267, the Etolian government dispatched several regiments of seasoned shieldbearers—armored in distinctive crab-like plate—to fight alongside Vicovaran units in the infamous sack of Vengerberg. However, unlike their Nilfgaardian-aligned counterparts, the Etolian troops rebelled against imperial command during the operation.

This insubordination significantly altered the course of the siege: instead of lasting just a day, it dragged on for six, but ultimately resulted in fewer Aedirnian casualties—estimates suggest the number dropped from 12,000 to approximately 6,000 thanks to the Etolian resistance.

As a result, the Nilfgaardian high command enacted punitive measures against the Etolian units. These included extended terms of service, increased surveillance, and harsher treatment—none of which proved effective at quelling dissent. After the Third Northern War, the remaining Etolian veterans—many of whom had been imprisoned—were executed upon release in 1279. This event triggered the Etolian Revolt of 1280, which in turn sowed the seeds for the broader uprising of 1310.

The Oranges Revolution and the Brief State of Sescafa (1322–1336)

A full-scale popular uprising in Etolia would take decades to emerge. Earlier revolts—such as those that occurred during the final years of Emhyr’s reign (1280–1290) and under his successor, Morvran Voorhis (1290–1320)—were all crushed with brutal efficiency. These crackdowns only intensified the fear of the Empire among the local population, accelerating the process of Nilfgaardization.

It was not until 1320—during the transition between the rule of Voorhis and the early consolidation of Emperor Calveit—that the seeds of open resistance began to take root. Inspired by the Crescent Moon independence movement in Nazair, and emboldened by the sympathy that movement had garnered across other imperial provinces, the Etolians began to organize in earnest. This gave rise to the River Unbound movement, which—like its Nazairi counterpart—quickly grew in popularity.

By 1322, it had gained enough momentum to declare open rebellion in the name of Etolian independence, centered in the fertile citrus-producing region of Sescafa.

Yet the rebellion would not result in full liberation. Although the Calveit government was, at the time, relatively weak, it managed to retain control over most of Etolia. The rebels, while successful in carving out a degree of autonomy, were only able to establish de facto

independence over Sescafa and its surrounding districts—the very heartland where the revolt had begun. Thus was born the so-called Kingdom of Sescafa, hailed by many as the spiritual successor to the old Kingdom of Etolia.

Despite a promising beginning, the state of Sescafa would last only fourteen years. A combination of poor governance, economic turmoil, growing disillusionment among the populace (with some even calling for the return of Nilfgaardian rule), and the resurgence of imperial forces following the suppression of the Second Nazairi Rebellion (1328–1331), all culminated in what became known as the Stained Rapid March—a swift and ruthless Nilfgaardian military campaign that crushed the fledgling kingdom and reincorporated the region into the province of Etolia.

The Haaki Invasion (1350 A.R.)

During the Haaki Invasion of the Northern Kingdoms in 1350 A.R.—a campaign which, despite its name, impacted much of the Nilfgaardian territory—the province of Etolia played a critical defensive role.

At the time of Ithlinne's prophecy, the so-called "Northern Kingdoms" extended as far south as Ebbing, which Nilfgaard itself considered back then as part of the "North." Thus, when the Haaki hordes crossed the eastern steppes of their native Haakland into imperial territory, Nilfgaardian command mobilized several provinces to halt their advance.

Etolian regiments, alongside troops from Lower Alba, Vicovaro, Rowan, and Ymlac, were deployed to fortify the interior eastern frontiers of the Empire. These coordinated defensive efforts proved decisive. The resistance offered by these provincial forces significantly delayed the Haaki advance and diverted it away from the empire's wealthier southern heartlands—especially the capital region of Nilfgaard proper.

Frustrated in the south, the Haaki hordes shifted their focus northward, devastating lesser-valued Nilfgaardian vassals and northern provinces before eventually pouring into what are now considered the modern boundaries of the Northern Kingdoms.

Nilfgaardian generals had initially viewed this as an opportunity—hoping to, after recover from the invasion, to launch a final war of conquest to bring the remaining Nordling states into the imperial fold. However, this plan was ultimately abandoned due to internal post-invasion fatigue, shifting priorities, and mounting political costs.

Climate

Owing to its southern location, Etolia enjoys a relatively mild climate—particularly along its coastline, where the ocean tempers the harsher extremes of both summer and winter. Winters, while short, can be surprisingly severe, as frigid air masses from the Far South collide with Etolia's modest mountain ranges (typically between 500 and 800 meters in elevation) before continuing their course northward.

Summers, in contrast, are characteristically long and generally gentle (though extreme temperatures are not uncommon), often lasting well into mid-October. This climatic stability is one of the reasons why Etolia has long been referred to as “the granary of Nilfgaard,” especially among citizens of the imperial capital and other provinces.

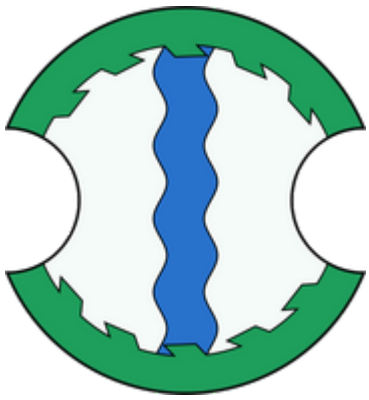
This climate also contributes to the province’s highly contrasting seasonal geography. During the summer months, Etolia is adorned with lush meadows and golden wheat fields, nourished by clear seasonal rivers around which prosperous settlements have emerged. Only one river—the Etol, from which the former kingdom and now province derives its name—retains a steady flow year-round.

Geography

Unlike many other imperial provinces, Etolia boasts a remarkably diverse geography. This is largely due to the fact that its mountains are not concentrated in a single range or region, but rather scattered throughout the territory. These mountainous formations are, in truth, extinct volcanoes that once emerged sporadically across the landscape, contributing—over the course of geological ages—to the fusion of what is now Etolia with the main continental landmass.

This ancient volcanic activity not only shaped the terrain but also enriched the soil, creating vast swathes of fertile land. Combined with Etolia’s favorable climate, this geological legacy is a key factor in the province’s long-standing role as "the granary of Nilfgaard." Fields nourished by mineral-rich earth continue to sustain extensive agricultural output, supporting both local populations and distant corners of the Empire.

Coat of Arms



The kingdom of Etolia Coat of Arms

The coat of arms from Etolia’s imperium era remains unknown. However, Nilfgaardian archaeologists believe it may have depicted a hobby falcon perched on a coastland Araucaria excelsa, due to the abundance of these two symbols found among the recovered artifacts of the Imperium. This imagery is thought to reference the founding site of the first settlement that would later give rise to the Imperium.

The coat of arms of the Kingdom of Etolia, by contrast, is better known. It features a river, surrounded by white with green borders, symbolizing the prosperity brought to the region by the Etol River.

The current provincial coat of arms uses a blue background, with a golden arrow, a white river, and—at the top—the upper half of the Nilfgaardian sun, set against its characteristic black field.

Religion

The original religion of the Etolians—meaning that which was practiced during the time of the Imperium—has been entirely lost to history. What little is known suggests it was polytheistic in nature. Some scholars speculate that certain deities now venerated in Nordling lands, such as Aphrodena or Aesculapius, may in fact be remnants of the ancient Imperium pantheon. This theory stems from the fact that the Nordlings not only absorbed much of the Imperium’s language into their emerging creole tongue but also incorporated elements of its cultural framework—most notably, as already mentioned, the adoption of the Imperium’s language as the so-called "Scholar’s Tongue." However, no definitive link can be established due to the lack of surviving records.

In contrast, far more is known about the religion of the Kingdom of Etolia—the cultural and political fusion born from the mingling of surviving Imperium citizens and incoming Nordling settlers following the former's collapse. Despite Nilfgaard’s later attempts to erase it from history after annexing the kingdom and converting it into a province, fragments of Etolia’s religious traditions have survived in historical texts and folklore.

The religion of the Kingdom of Etolia closely resembled Nordling polytheism, but with one key distinction: it was significantly more hierarchical. At its head stood the Logeús, a high priest figure who functioned as the central authority in religious matters—akin to a Pontifex or High Priest in other faiths.

With Etolia’s transformation into an imperial province and the imposition of the Great Sun cult as state religion, the native faith was systematically dismantled. Nonetheless, a minor fragment endured through theological compromise: after prolonged debate, Nilfgaardian clergy allowed the Etolian solar deity Lioshe to persist within the framework of the Imperial Faith, declaring him a manifestation of the Great Sun.

Culture

Etolia's culture was once among the richest and most intricate of the entire Western Coast of the Old Continent. However, with the arrival of the Nilfgaardian Empire and the systematic decimating of traditional Etolian values, it was reduced to a shadow of its former self. Very few of its customs were approved by the new authorities; most had to be preserved and practiced in secret—at least in the cities.

In rural areas, the changes were far less pronounced. Only in those settlements where the population consisted of a mix of Nilfgaardian colonists and local inhabitants did cultural shifts become more drastic—either through the imposition of the colonists customs or via a form of syncretism that the imperial authorities deemed "tolerable" to a certain extent.

Gastronomy

Etolia is a land of complex and diverse gastronomy. This is due to its intricate history, favorable climate, geographic location, and fertile soil.

Food has been one of the few cultural elements that Nilfgaardians did not attempt to erase. After the annexation of the territory, they instead adopted much of Etolian cuisine as "their own."

What sets Etolian cuisine apart from that of the North and even the rest of the Empire lies in its dishes, which are often characterized by their elaborate preparation—regardless of whether they are solid or liquid. Additionally, much like its neighbor Ebbing, Etolian cuisine tends to use a lot of spices—perhaps even more so—due to the fact that many ships from distant lands such as Melukka, Zangvebar, Ofir, Hannu, and Zerrikania stop there before continuing northward.

Furthermore, thanks to its climate and imperial directives, many spices and other exotic plants can be grown and cultivated there, reducing the Empire's dependence on foreign powers. Only certain fruits—such as coconuts, pitahayas, and similar varieties—remain impossible to produce through "national cultivation" due to climate barriers.

Guilds and Leagues

Guilds in Etolia are a relatively recent institution, introduced following the Nilfgaardian conquest. Traditionally, the people of the province—formerly an independent kingdom—organized themselves into leagues (*ligae* in Scholar Language). These leagues functioned similarly to guilds but with a more individualistic and temporary structure.

Leagues typically arose when a problem or challenge exceeded the capacity of a single individual or household to resolve on their own. Thus emerged collectives such as the League of Bards, the League of Shipyards, or the League of Farmers, etc.—ad hoc temporal alliances formed around specific issues. In practice, any group of individuals could form a league to address a pressing collective need.

It is widely believed that this system originated during the early years of the Etolian kingdom, when it unified the various settlements of the region—many of which were former cities turned into city-states that had survived the fall of the Imperium or had been founded by Nordling colonists. At that stage, the so-called kingdom may not have been a monarchy in the formal sense, but rather a unifying institution which—under Nordling influence—gradually evolved into a hereditary monarchy.

After the Nilfgaardian annexation, leagues continued to exist and were even encouraged by imperial authorities. Their temporary and pragmatic nature made them an efficient mechanism within the larger imperial machine—allowing for problem-solving and project coordination without long-term resistance to imperial control.

Military

Unlike in other countries such as Ebbing, where military culture is often tied to an individual's social status rather than their actual competence, the military culture of the former kingdom of Etolia was shaped more by the perceived status of the profession itself. Except among the noble elite, the military was widely regarded as a low-prestige occupation—one of the few available paths for those living on the margins of society or attempting to reintegrate into it.

As a result, the Etolian army was largely composed of social outcasts, criminals, and individuals deemed undesirable. This reality would ultimately seal Etolia's fate when facing the Nilfgaardian war machine. Despite its numbers, the Etolian military lacked both training and discipline compared to the Imperial Army, which led to a swift and overwhelming victory for Nilfgaard—and the rapid annexation of Etolia as a new province of the empire.

After the conquest, Etolia's military culture underwent a radical transformation. Most social outcasts who had previously filled the ranks of the army were either enslaved and reassigned to other sectors or replaced by Nilfgaardian slaves with actual military experience. Only members of the upper echelons who pledged loyalty to the Empire retained their positions—and even among them, only those who demonstrated genuine competence were allowed to continue serving under imperial rule.

Traditions

One of the most popular traditions in Etolia—preserved even under Nilfgaardian rule—is the celebration of the so-called Great Seasonal Games. Held during the transitional seasons of spring and autumn, these games were originally dedicated to Etolia's ancestral solar deity, later replaced by the Nilfgaardian Great Sun.

The games are held on a biennial basis, alternating each year between spring and autumn editions. The Autumn Games are generally reserved for local participation, with both professional athletes and amateurs competing in a variety of sporting disciplines in

exchange for a wide range of prizes. Participants usually represent different regions of the province, local teams—usually financed by guilds, regional governments, or solitary patrons—or, more rarely, compete individually.

Most sporting disciplines are divided into two categories: male and female. However, a handful of unisex disciplines also exist—mostly in those where biological differences between the sexes are less decisive or outright irrelevant. These unisex categories are often used as tie-breakers in cases where a male and a female contestant (or team) have earned the same number of prizes throughout the games.

The Spring Games follow a similar format but are open to participants from outside Etolia, including other Nilfgaardian provinces, vassal states, and even foreign nations.

Each edition of the Games, whether in spring or autumn, culminates with the crowning of the Solar Grand Champion or Champions—the individual or team (regardless of format) who has accumulated the most prizes across all disciplines. The champion or champions are awarded then with ceremonial crown made of electrum.

The games typically span the entirety of their respective seasons, lasting throughout the whole of spring or autumn.

However, the Great Seasonal Games are more than just sporting events in Etolia—they are a cornerstone of regional identity and pride. Even under Nilfgaardian administration, the games have remained a rare and highly visible symbol of local autonomy and cultural continuity.

For many Etolians, participation in the games—whether as athletes, organizers, or spectators—is considered a rite of passage into adult life, especially among rural communities. The crowning of the Solar Grand Champion is often seen not only as a celebration of physical prowess, but also of communal prestige and the enduring spirit of the province.

The games have also inspired a wide array of cultural expressions, including folk songs, epic poems, children’s games, and even stylized arena dramas performed in theatres. Merchants and artisans often release commemorative goods and crafts during game seasons, further blending tradition with local economic rhythms.

Despite occasional tensions with Nilfgaardian authorities from the capital over their non-imperial origins, the games continue to enjoy tacit approval due to their popularity and capacity to channel Etolian patriotism into festive, state-sanctioned outlets.

Another popular tradition in Etolia is the oratorio, or *oratorium* in Scholar Language. This form of musical performance serves primarily as a transitional device between acts of a play, functioning as a musical interlude that provides necessary context to the audience while making the exposition less tedious. By doing so, it allows the subsequent staging to feel more engaging and dynamic, even when the theater, amphitheater, or venue faces limitations in budget or space.

After Nilfgaard's conquest and due to the growing popularity of opera in the Northern Kingdoms, some oratories eventually broke away from their transitional role and became standalone works. These are most often religious in nature—commissioned by the imperial governor as a way to convert the masses to the faith of the Great Sun—but profane oratories also exist, narrating secular tales.

Although far from being as popular as in certain Far Eastern countries—or in Ofir—calligraphy remains a deeply important tradition in the cultural and religious life of Etolia. This importance gave rise to a distinct profession of calligraphers. In fact, the tradition was so culturally ingrained that it survived even after the Nilfgaardian conquest, with only the language being changed to Nilfgaardian and the deity (s) to the Imperial Great Sun.

In the local variant of the Nordling religion once practiced in the region, what was considered sacred was not so much the symbols themselves, but rather the revealed word of the gods. Although symbolic elements were present, they did not appear with the same abundance seen in temples across regions like Temeria or Kovir. Etolian religious art was marked by occasional, minimalist iconoclasm. The rest—columns, walls, stained glass, and so forth—were decorated instead with sacred writings invoking the god or gods to whom the temple was dedicated.

These inscriptions were typically rendered using the ancient alphabet of the Imperium, although a few temples were known to use the Modern Nordling Alphabet as well.

Most people in Etolia wear tattoos. The origin of this practice is uncertain, lost to time and myth. However, what is known for certain is that Etolian tattoos were the origin of the tattoo trend that spread throughout the Western Coast, influencing cultures far beyond their borders.

It is widely believed that this custom may have begun as a military identifier during the time of the Imperium, when soldiers would receive ink markings to denote their legion, rank, or function. Over time, as the Imperium faded and the Kingdom of Etolia emerged, the practice evolved into a marker of social class. The more elaborate and intricate the tattoo, the higher the bearer stood in the social hierarchy—often indicating nobility, wealth, or scholarly prestige. In contrast, simpler tattoos denoted humbler origins or lower status, though they were still worn with pride.

After the conquest, Nilfgaard chose not to suppress the custom, recognizing its practical benefits for the imperial machinery. Tattoos served as effective tools for census control, personal identification, and—much like in the days of the Ancient Imperium—military organization. Rather than eradicating the tradition, Nilfgaard merely codified it, adapting it to serve the needs of bureaucracy and empire.

Mysteries

A popular feature of Etolian culture is the tradition of the mysteries. Originally religious in nature, these mysteries often took the form of marginal—and frequently extravagant—interpretations of the former kingdom's native religion, itself a local variant of the Nordling

faith. Their primary aim was to explore the deeper, more elusive questions of divinity through unconventional means such as hypnosis, trance states, or the use of psychoactive substances. As a result, numerous one deity sects emerged—many of which, while not inherently harmful, were considered hazardous enough to pose a public health concern.

Following the Nilfgaardian conquest, these mysteries were significantly reduced in number due to the Empire's relentless persecution of heresy. Nevertheless, they did not vanish. Instead, they gradually adapted to the Imperial rule or secularized. Some simply replaced their original deity with the Nilfgaardian Great Sun, while others rebranded themselves as Circles of Esoteric Philosophy, continuing their practices under a more discreet and philosophical guise to avoid persecution, dissolution, or—at worst—eradication.

Economy

Etolia's economy, as might be expected, is primarily centered around the primary sector—a consequence both of imperial directives and the province's favorable climate and fertile land. Agriculture remains the dominant force for most of the year, with crops such as canola, citrus fruits like citrons, oranges, and papedas, and grains such as farro and barley forming the backbone of rural economic life.

During the winter months, particularly in the coastal regions, the service sector becomes more prominent, driven by seasonal tourism, maritime trade, and hospitality industries. These economic fluctuations have created a dual structure in Etolia's economy: agrarian in the hinterlands and service-based along the coast.

The industrial sector, once a source of Etolia's pre-imperial strength and prosperity, has been reduced to a shadow of its former self following the Nilfgaardian annexation. Large-scale industry now exists only in two key areas: textile production and shipbuilding—both tightly regulated and often serving imperial needs rather than local development.

However, small-scale craftsmanship remains prevalent across Etolia. Blacksmithing, pottery, leatherwork, and woodworking continue to provide livelihoods for many. These artisan trades occupy the economic spaces left vacant by the absence of heavy industry, helping to supply the daily needs of the average Etolian—and, on occasion, those of foreign visitors.

Demographics

The population of Etolia is estimated at around two million. Of these, approximately 85% identify as Etolian, 10% as Nilfgaardian, and the remaining 5% is composed of other human ethnicities and various non-human groups.

The majority of the population resides in rural areas, with the Frog Hills being a particularly notable example of agrarian density. The coastal regions follow in terms of population distribution, with urban centers ranking last. Among Etolia's cities, the most

populous by far is the capital, Axen.

People

Together with Nilfgaard and Vicovaro, Etolia is one of the most densely populated territories of the Empire—a fact largely attributed to its favorable climate and fertile lands.

The people of Etolia, known as *Etolians*, are the product of centuries of cultural and ethnic intermingling. As a result, they exhibit a wide range of physical features, though certain traits remain more common among them than in other populations both within and beyond the Empire.

In terms of complexion, Etolian skin tones range from fair to olive. The *swarthy* hues occasionally found among coastal Nordlings are notably more prevalent in Etolia, particularly in lowland and seaside regions.

Blond and red hair, as well as light-colored eyes, do occur but are less common than in Northern kingdoms such as Temeria or Kaedwen—likely due to the genetic legacy left by the human populations of the Imperium and their eventual mixture with incoming Nordling settlers. Curly hair, by contrast, is especially widespread and often seen as a distinct Etolian trait.

Etolian men typically display a marked abundance of facial and body hair, often surpassing that of their Northern counterparts.

Examples of Etolian Names

Due to the intensity of Nilfgaardian assimilation policies, much of the original Etolian naming tradition has been either lost or heavily altered. The former native structure—given name + family name + second given name + second family name **(Example: Alexion Kosdamene Cleonio Nylemanos)**—was gradually replaced by the standard Nilfgaardian convention: given name + aep/var + parent's or family name (Example: Achermo aep Eros)

Nevertheless, vestiges of the old Etolian system persist, particularly in rural and coastal communities. There, one may still find naming formulas that subtly reflect older customs, albeit adapted to Nilfgaardian linguistic and bureaucratic norms. A common rural Etolian variant follows this pattern: given name + parent's name + var + family name, with some flexibility in order and structure depending on local tradition. (Example: Anthaia Aspasia var Andrit)

The following is a list of names and surnames of the independent Etolian Kingdom along with those derived from the original Etolian culture, as filtered through Nilfgaardian phonetics and orthographic conventions. These names stand apart from the rest of the Etolian naming pool, which—if not identical—is often very similar to those found in the Lower Alba region and, by extension, in the imperial capital.

Male Names

Abronychus, Acamaet (from Acamanas), Acacius, Acesias, Acestorides, Achaeus, Achermo, Achilles, Acronio, Adeimanth (from Adeimantus), Aelian, Aetion, Aesopo, Aglaophon, Aelian, Agasio, Agise, Agathoth (from Agathocles), Akiso (from Akis), Alexion, Ambryon, Änbri, Anaxylo, Auleo, Arentyno, Arentynio, Arentynios, Ariono, Artemon, Athanmo (from Athan), Blapesion, Byomo, Bolusse, Bupalo, Cercydo, Cesaré, Corey, Chandrelos, Charondo, Cleomedo, Cleonio, Colaeseo, Cylomeo, Cymeuro, Damanú, Damaophon, Darese, Democritus, Dexippus, Dionio, Draco, Draconeo, Elemenos, Eskulap, Epikur, Eucratides, Eusebire, Eusimos, Exchavier, Galeno, Grytomeno, Hesodio, Hemor, Hogqúa, Jase, Jaseus, Jason, Jonû, Kialo, Kialosei, Kialos, Kisonaros, Kisonarios, Lexaero, Lobemo, Nadarion, Nataser, Melaser, Micon, Outiso, Oxyll, Paeón, Phrango, Phrangoïs, Pelopsus, Petorir, Pindareo, Protagoras, Rhïamos, Simon, Symoneo, Tanaion, Terpêr, Thaleso, Tidaso, Torraginos, Zeno, Zoniseo.

Female Names

Aedesia, Aegineta, Aesara, Agallis, Aglaona, Agrippa, Anthaia (from Antheia), Anaxandra, Anyte, Anytima, Aphrodea, Aphrodena, Arentynia, Aspasia, Baeria, Baegela, Blape, Chandrele, Chloé, Cleopatrea, Corinna, Corisandea, Cymeraina, Cyrce, Damoklae (from Damokleia), Dido, Drusilla, Glaukyra (from Glauke), Elemenia, Elmyna, Euthina, Euthalay (from Euthalia), Fita, Helena, Hesa, Jovinue, Junno, Junypera, Iomeia, Kassandra, Kassyde (from Kassiopeia), Kiala, Lanika, Leontera, Lexaera, Lucia, Lysara (from Lyssandra), Lysaera, Natasera, Madinosia, Minervere, Myrrheia (from Myrrha), Nykané, Myia, Nykanta (from Nykante), Robinoa, Roxania, Tatiana, Tanaia, Thalona (from Thaleia), Torragina, Xenia, Xentia, Xenteia, Xeniope (from Xenopeia), Gwidazia, Yonei (from Ione), Zenuya, Zoyara (from Zoia).

Surnames

Aep Anteros, Aep Eros, Aep Dartha, Aep Deimos, Aep Heius, Aep Julius, Aep Kalama, Aep Tolomen, Aep Troska, Aep Tylluo, Alvaroudes, Alvaroudina, Argyra, Argyra, Argyris, Bassolios, Bassolia, Dysmatories, Erythomene, Fitous, Gourzides, Gourzidaina, Kannabö, Kaseomeniko Kosdamenos, Kosdamene, Marasis, Memekini, Nujenne, Nugemanis, Nylemanos, Nylemane, Teseka, Teseko, var Afród, var Afendouly, var Alafouz, var Alván, var Andrit, var Anesty, var Arvani, var Arystól, var Axyot, var Calath, var Chollew, var Dimak, var Dukak, var Espar, var Floros, var Fragk, var Fylypp, var Gavras, var Hatz, var Iako, var Karras, var Koromyl, var Latsz, var Loizo, var Pall, var Pavl, var Rova, var Socrot, var Tsam, Voïka, Voïkos, Voïkenes, Voïkemen.

Language

The official language of Etolia is Nilfgaardian. However, in practice—and despite repeated attempts at suppression and the imposition of harsh penalties—the majority of the population continues to speak the Etolian dialect of Northern Common, especially in rural areas.

Even Nilfgaardian settlers brought into the province eventually find themselves compelled to learn Common, or at least a pidgin version of it blended with their native Nilfgaardian, due to the linguistic realities of everyday life.

In urban centers, Nilfgaardian is more frequently heard, particularly in official settings and public discourse. Yet even there, it is often a language reserved for the outside world. Behind closed doors, in homes and local businesses, many Etolians continue to speak Common—both as a quiet form of resistance and simply because it is their mother tongue, far easier and more familiar than the difficult-to-pronounce and complex Nilfgaardian.

Notable Locations

Cities

- Axen (capital)
- Boreasburg
- Fodinaburg
- Dyveken
- Irin
- Kaerenla
- Magnaburg
- Portmimus
- Vetteburg

Settlements

- Kreza
- Lagerfeld

Rivers

Landmarks

- Feainne an Lac
- Frog Hills
- Hornaq Mountain
- Red Horn Massif
- Lonely Beach
- Skeleton Trail
- Toad Mountains

Trivia

- Due to its name's similarity with the real-world region of Aetolia-Acarnania and Anatolia, much of the inspiration behind this expansion of the imperial province carries strong Greek overtones. In Spanish and some other Romance languages, the real-life region of Aetolia is translated as Etolia, reinforcing the connection.
- Because of the minor yet present connections between the TTRPG written by Sapkowski, *Oko Yrrhedesa* (Eye of Yrrhedes), and the world of The Witcher, it was decided to tie the history of the Imperium to Etolia, as it is geographically the most plausible fit. However, instead of relying on Golden Age Imperial / Western Roman influence—despite the name Imperium—the worldbuilding drew heavily from the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium), in order to avoid overused clichés.
- The expansion of Etolia, was also inspired by the short-lived successor states that emerged after the Sack of Constantinople during the Fourth Crusade, such as the *Latin Empire*. Specially the section of the Kingdom of Etolia.
- Most of the name and surname examples used for this expansion of Etolia are either invented with Greek phonetics in mind or are adaptations of real-world Greek names and surnames.
- As for the Scholar Language, the idea is to make it a unique language rather than simply "*The Witcher's Latin*." Grammatically and phonetically, it would follow the structure and pronunciation of Latino sine flexione, with vocabulary drawn roughly 50/50 from Classical, Vulgar, Late, and Neo-Latin (e.g., taxonomical Latin), while the rest would derive from a mix of Ancient, Byzantine, and Modern Greek.

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